AMENDMENT TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended)   A method of processing a natural
language input, comprising:
      identifying a plurality of N-best part-of-speech (POS)
          sequences corresponding to the natural language input;
      identifying a likely base noun phrase (baseNP) sequence
          based on the N-best POS sequences identified; and
     outputting the likely baseNP sequence.

2. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein identifying a likely
baseNP sequence comprises:
      identifying a plurality of baseNP sequences for each of the
          N-best POS tag sequences; and
     calculating which of the plurality of baseNP sequences is
          most likely.

3. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein calculating which of
the plurality of baseNP sequences is most likely comprises:
      calculating a likely baseNP sequence that is most likely
          based on lexical information indicative of a position
          of words in the natural language input relative to
          baseNPs identified in the baseNP sequences.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein calculating a likely
baseNP sequence that is most likely based on lexical information
comprises:
      calculating a likely baseNP sequence that is most likely
          based on lexical information indicative of POS tags
          assigned to the words in the natural language input.

5. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein calculating a likely
baseNP sequence comprises:

calculating a likely baseNP sequence based on the lexical
information for every word in the natural language
input.

6. (Original) The method of claim 2 wherein the natural language
input comprises a sentence and wherein calculating which of the
plurality of baseNP sequences is most likely comprises:
calculating which of the plurality of baseNP sequences is
most likely over the entire sentence.

7. (Original) The method of claim 3 wherein a baseNP rule
comprises a sequence of POS tags corresponding to words in the
natural language input identified as a baseNP and wherein
calculating a likely baseNP sequence comprises:
calculating a probability of POS tags and baseNP rules,
given their context.

8. (Original) The method of claim 7 wherein calculating a
probability of POS tags and baseNP rules comprises:
calculating the probability of POS tags and baseNP rules
given n prior POS tags or baseNP rules.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein identifying a likely
baseNP sequence includes:
calculating a probability of each of the N-best POS
sequences given the natural language input.

10. (Currently Amended) A natural language processing system for
processing a natural language input, comprising:
a base noun phrase (baseNP) identifier configured to receive
a plurality of N-best part-of-speech (POS) tag
sequences for the natural language input and identify a
likely baseNP sequence of baseNPs corresponding to the

natural language input, given the N-best POS tag sequences.

11. (Original) The system of claim 10 and further comprising:
   a POS tagger, coupled to the baseNP identifier, receiving the natural language input and calculating the N-best POS tag sequences corresponding to the natural language input.

12. (Original) The system of claim 11 wherein the baseNP identifier is configured to identify a plurality of baseNP sequences for each of the POS tag sequences and calculate which of the plurality of baseNP sequences is the likely baseNP sequence.

13. (Original) The system of claim 12 wherein the baseNP identifier further comprises:
   a unified statistical model that includes lexical information indicative of a position of words in the natural language input relative to baseNPs identified in the baseNP sequences.

14. (Original) The system of claim 13 wherein a baseNP rule comprises a sequence of POS tags corresponding to words in the natural language input that are identified as a baseNP and wherein the unified statistical model includes a baseNP rule component for calculating a probability of POS tags and baseNP rules, given contextual information.

15. (Original) The system of claim 14 wherein the baseNP rule component is configured to calculate the probability of POS tags and baseNP rules, given n prior POS tags and baseNP rules.

16. (Original) The system of claim 15 wherein the natural language input comprises a sentence and wherein the unified statistical model is configured for calculating which of the plurality of baseNP sequences is most likely over the entire sentence.

17. (Currently Amended) A method of processing a linguistic input, comprising:

      identifying ~~a plurality of~~ N-best part-of-speech (POS) sequences corresponding to the linguistic input;

      identifying one or more base noun phrases (baseNPs) for each of the N-best POS sequences to form a plurality of different possible baseNP sequences corresponding to each of the POS sequences;

      for each baseNP sequence, identifying whether it is a likely baseNP sequence based on a probability of the associated POS sequence and a probability of the baseNP sequence, given lexical information indicative of a position of words in the linguistic input relative to the baseNPs identified in the baseNP sequence; and

      outputting the likely baseNP sequence identified.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein identifying one or more baseNPs for each of the N-best POS sequences comprises:

      identifying baseNP rules for each of the N-best POS sequences, the baseNP rules comprising a sequence of POS tags corresponding to words in the linguistic input identified as a baseNP.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein identifying whether each baseNP sequence is a likely baseNP sequence, comprises:

      calculating a probability of POS tags and baseNP rules,

          given n prior POS tags or baseNP rules in the POS

sequence.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19 wherein the linguistic input comprises a sentence and wherein identifying whether each baseNP sequence is a likely baseNP sequence comprises:

identifying whether each baseNP sequence is a likely baseNP sequence over the entire sentence.